

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
 INTERVIEW WITH KATIE COURIC ON NBC-TV PROGRAM, "TODAY"  
 PENTAGON  
 AUGUST 2, 1994

KATIE COURIC: On Close-up this morning, Secretary of Defense William Perry. The United States has sent troops and supplies to Rwanda and Zaire as part of a massive relief effort for Rwandan refugees. Secretary Perry visited the region over the weekend. And this morning he is in the Pentagon briefing room.

Mr. Secretary, good morning. Welcome to Today.

SEC. PERRY: Good morning, Katie. Thank you.

MS. COURIC: About 200 U.S. troops are in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. More are in surrounding countries in an effort to assist in the relief efforts there. How many U.S. troops do you envision ultimately in the region? And exactly what will they be doing?

SEC. PERRY: We could have -- we have about 1200 troops in the region right now, and that number could go up to as many as 3000. We don't know the exact number yet, but I think 3000 is probably the max in the entire region. That includes Rwanda, Zaire, Uganda. And we also have some troops in Mombasa (?), all as part of this logistics operation, this logistics network that we have set up.

MS. COURIC: You've been emphasizing, Secretary Perry, that the troops will not be involved in any military action; just simply humanitarian efforts. What if the civil war re-erupts? What kind of game plan is there in terms of a quick exit strategy?

SEC. PERRY: Two comments on that, Katie. First of all, there is a peacekeeping operation being formed. It's called UNAMIR. It's the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Rwanda. And that will involve perhaps 4000 troops, international, from many different nations. And that should be up and operating by perhaps the 20th of August.

I met, when I was in Kigali, with General Delere, who is the commander of that group, and he was finalizing his plans to put that peacekeeping operation together. The United States will not have forces in UNAMIR. That's

the force which will be concerned with maintaining the peace and stability. Our forces are going to be providing the humanitarian operation. We will have -- with each of our units, we will have security forces to provide self-protection for them in case that's needed.

MS. COURIC: I know part of the goal of U.S. troops in the Rwandan area is to try to encourage the refugees to return home. Yet there are reports this morning that Hutu soldiers are intimidating some of those refugees, trying to keep them from returning home. And, in fact, they're using the refugee camps as a base to regroup and to perhaps mobilize for future reprisals against the Tutsis. How is that problem being addressed? And did you see evidence of that when you were there?

SEC. PERRY: I did not see evidence of that when I was there, but I did hear reports of that when I was there from several different sources. And so it is a matter of concern. There are several things that can be done about that, and we will assist with some of those. First and most importantly, the Rwandan government has stated very clearly that it welcomes the refugees back and that there will be no reprisals on refugees. Secondly, we have to get that word out to the camps. And both the government and the United Nations are establishing information links, radio broadcasts to the refugees, to get this message across to them. And we have offered them some assistance in equipment and technical facilities in order to facilitate those communications.

MS. COURIC: Moving on to Haiti, Secretary Perry, as you well know, the U.N. Security Council has authorized a U.S.-led invasion of Haiti if, in fact, sanctions do not work. Haitian leaders have responded defiantly; General Cedras thumbing his nose at the U.N. Security Council. Did you expect that response? And has that changed the strategy in any way?

SEC. PERRY: That's compatible with their response to the concern of the United States and the concern of the international community right along. It's disappointing, but it's not surprising. They should take the United Nations resolution very seriously. If they do not, they will be making a big mistake.

MS. COURIC: The time frame for a possible invasion seems up in the air at this point. Can you give us any kind of idea what might prompt military action?

SEC. PERRY: I'm sorry, Katie; I don't want to comment at all on either the time scale or the motivation for an invasion.

MS. COURIC: Do you think that military action should be avoided at all possible costs, or can you envision a nonmilitary solution?

SEC. PERRY: I do envision a nonmilitary solution. Indeed, that's the course of action which we are still on. The increased sanctions which were put in just a few weeks ago will put additional pressure on the ruling regime in Haiti today. And just yesterday we made an agreement with the Dominican government which will have the effect of tightening the border between the Dominican and Haiti. All those things are still operating, still have a chance to work. And I think also this U.N.

resolution sends a very strong message to the ruling regime in Haiti. So I think we do still have an opportunity to see that work.

MS. COURIC: I guess let me rephrase the question. You envision a nonmilitary solution. Do you think it is realistic?

SEC. PERRY: I do think it is realistic, but we cannot guarantee it. And that is why we sought the U.N. resolution to give us international sanction for an alternative, if that were to be needed.

MS. COURIC: In closing, Senator Bob Dole has announced that Republicans will push for legislation that would force President Clinton to seek congressional approval for an invasion of Haiti, and it's widely believed that it would pass in Congress. Is that something you'd hate to see?

SEC. PERRY: I do not believe that a congressional resolution is needed for any of the actions that we are contemplating in Haiti. We do not seek that sort of a congressional resolution. The president has promised the Congress that he would consult carefully with them before any action were taken, before any military action were taken in Haiti.

MS. COURIC: Secretary of Defense William Perry. Mr. Secretary, thanks again for joining us.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you, Katie. It was nice to talk with you.

END